
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google[™] books

<http://books.google.com>



THE TASTE OF DEATH
AND
THE LIFE OF GRACE

FORSYTH

UC-NRLF



\$B 689 327

SMALL BOOKS
ON GREAT
SUBJECTS - XXI.



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
DAVIS

ISAAC FOOT COLLECTION

Small Books on Great Subjects.—XXI.

**THE TASTE OF DEATH AND THE LIFE
OF GRACE.**

By P. T. FORSYTH, M.A., D.D.

1

**THE TASTE OF DEATH
AND
THE LIFE OF GRACE.**

**By
P. T. Forsyth, M.A., D.D.,
Cambridge.**

**London:
JAMES CLARKE & CO.,
13 & 14, Fleet Street. 1901.**

**LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
DAVIS**

Contents.

THE TASTE OF DEATH AND THE LIFE OF GRACE.

	PAGE
I.— <i>The Taste of Death</i>	3
1. The Taste of Death To-day— Pessimism.	
2. The Taste of Death in this Sense for Christ. The Moral or Second Death, and the Victory of Faith alone.	
II.— <i>Death for the Million</i>	25
1. A World of Death.	
2. Our Fatal Avoidance of Death.	
III.— <i>Death as a Gift and Grace of God</i>	44
1. The Exegesis.	
2. Dying not only the Act of God but His Gift to Christ.	
3. The Fascination of Death.	

	PAGE
4. Death and Grace as Experience and Trust. The Malady of the Time is that Experience is wider than Trust. Misery on the Cross and the Cross on Misery. The Romantic Dilution of the Gospel. Idyll and Tragedy.	
5. The Mystery of Iniquity and the Miracle of Forgiveness. Evolution and Revolution.	
6. The Greatness of Human Nature and of its Redemption.	

THE DIVINE SELF-EMPTYING.

I.— <i>Limitation a Power and not a Defect</i>	95
II.— <i>The Divine Personality</i> ...	99
III.— <i>The Incarnation and its Moral Reality</i>	104
IV.— <i>The Incarnation as the Miracle of Grace is not in the Birth but in the Death of Christ</i> ...	112
V.— <i>The Son's Subordination and its Practical Bearings</i>	118
VI.— <i>The God of the Future the Giving God</i>	124

I.

**The Taste of Death and
the Life of Grace.**

THE TASTE OF DEATH AND THE LIFE OF GRACE.

"That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."—HEBREWS II. 9.

In this great verse I would enforce these three points :

- I. He tasted death.
- II. It was a universal death.
- III. It was a grace and gift of God to Him.

I. Jesus Christ not only died, but He tasted death as incredible bitterness and penury of soul. I would dwell on the psychology even more than on the theology of it.

II. He did so because He died for every man. He experienced in a Divine life the universal death.

III. Yet this desertion and agony of death was a gift and grace of God, not only to us, but to Him. And He knew it was so. And that faith was His victory and our redemption.

I.—THE TASTE OF DEATH.

Christ not only died, but He tasted death. He gauged its bitterness, meanness, and dismal woe.

1. *The Taste of Death To-day.*

The Englishman is an optimist. He has little sympathy with the pessimistic systems which lay such hold of other lands. He puts them down to disordered digestion; he is like an ancient haruspice; he is too much influenced by the viscera, and too ready to read events in the state of the liver. His optimism is based quite as much upon ignorance as upon faith; he succeeds, so far as success is attainable by

underrating what he has to contend with. In the spiritual region this is especially so. He preserves his piety rather by going on as if there were no spiritual foes, than by recognising and defeating them. He lacks the spiritual imagination; his faith, therefore, is not very relevant in its form to the spiritual situation of the hour. He does not grasp the world-problem; he does not master it with the world-soul. He may call his Christianity Catholic, but it is not really ecumenical. It meets *his* needs rather than those of the race. It reflects a temporary situation rather than the eternal problem of the soul. It handles some form of death or phase of life, rather than the race's life or the race's doom. He does not readily apprehend the human problem or make the soul's last stand. And, therefore, he does not draw upon the last resources of his creed, or elicit the deepest powers of his Church, his Saviour,

or his God. We cannot realise the riches of Christ till we have well-sounded the need of Him.

If we try to look at the matter with larger and other eyes than our own, we may come to perceive that in the death and misery which we are too healthy to dwell on, there are spiritual opportunities far richer than the mere chance of wiping them out or alleviating them. And a true diagnosis of the time may show that the modern difficulty is not death so much as pain. Such is the case in other lands of Europe if not in our own. I speak more of the old civilisation than of the New World. Life grows more and more severe. Pain becomes more inward—more in the nature of care, fear, or despair. It is, therefore, more intractable and taxing. Zymotic diseases abate, and nervous increase. Grief and strain advance along with physical security and comfort. Civilisation

only internalises the trouble. We have fewer wounds, but more weariness. We are better cared for, but we have more care. There is less agony, perhaps, but, perhaps also, more misery; less that we see, more that we divine.

Besides, we grow more sensitive. The nervous organisation grows more susceptible. Or if our nerves feel no more our sympathies do. The old pain is more felt, more impatiently borne. For this the Gospel itself is in some measure responsible. We very properly hear much of the Gospel as amelioration; but we ought to hear more of it as aggravation. It makes men worse on the way to make them better. At least, it carries home and brings out the evil that is in them. Its law enters that sin may be shown to be sin, and the soul be shut up unto mercy by being cornered into despair. And it is another phase of the same action in the Gospel

when its ideals turn our achievements to dust, and put us out of all conceit with our actual state. Its promises make us more impatient of the slow payment we receive, and its hopes make us resent more keenly the small instalments that arrive. The Gospel has fixed in the race, even of its deniers, a deeper conviction of destined bliss, and, therefore, pain is felt to be more of an intrusion. It is more of an intrusion into the ideal order of things. More people than ever before feel their right to happiness and resent its destruction. There is more anger at pain, and at the order of things including it. The mind of Europe is a magnified Job. We are rent asunder by a progressive culture and an arrested ethic, by an imagination that grows faster than the practical conditions of realising it. Reality seems several lives beyond intuition. We dream a dream of good, but the Agnostics will not

let us identify it with the ultimate reality of God. And for want of God our practical progress limps and halts far in the wake of our great surmise. And of the moral energy that we do have so much is engrossed with healing or preventing pain, that it is withdrawn from the noble enduring of it, from the conversion and sanctification of wounds incurable.

Many would welcome death as release from fruitless, hopeless suffering. An increasing number, especially abroad, end by suicide a life of moral confusion ; and many more would do so if they had the courage, or if they could get rid of the hereditary arrest. Death is less regarded with supernatural awe, and men quail more at the earthly misery before or after, at the poverty and helplessness it may entail on those who are left.

From thinking more of pain than of death people are passing on to think of death itself as a

form of pain rather than as a supernatural mystery or a spiritual experience. It comes not so much as a ghost, but as a torturer. Men used to pray for delivery from sudden death; now they pray for delivery by it—for sudden death, to cheat the pain which they dread more.

Death affects the person of the man less and his sense more. He does not think of it in relation to what he is, but to what he feels. And he feels it as the dissolution of all personal relations, sympathies, and helps. Faith views it as the deepening of the personality by a new intimacy of personal relation to God in Christ, but it is not so that it is felt by this age. It is an ache rather than an experience. We are passive in it and not active. It is the loss of all we have been gaining, and not the gain of all we have been hoping. It scatters our wrath, wilts our affection, and turns the

love we clung to into wretched regrets. We do not count on a future for ourselves, and when we think of the future of our dear ones we are prone to wish we had not had a past. Death ceases to be a personal act and becomes a mere inevitable fact, and it sinks to the commonness of all mere facts when severed from acts. In a word, we just die with the rest instead of dying with Christ.

So we taste death more than our fathers did. It rankles more. It lingers on the palate. It is taken by many with the daily food. It is a present misery rather than an imaginative fear. It is a tale of mud flats and wan struggles rather than anything with the dignity of the unseen and the majesty of spiritual fear. Death becomes a natural enemy more than a supernatural mystery, a moral irritant rather than a spectral dread. It becomes a moral problem where it used to be a moral penalty. It does

not so much terrify as a ghost, but intrudes like a Satan to accuse the goodness of God and impugn the reality of His moral order. It does not so much bring another world near as it increases the pain and terror of this. Men do not pine to be immortal, but to escape pain and avert it from those they love.

What is the *taste* of death?

That is something horrible—below the power of any art to convey. Art may try expression by sight or sound. But taste! No art speaks to the sense of taste. So the horror of the deathliest death cannot be mitigated or dignified by the treatment of art. Death in its lees is bitter and ashy. It is nauseous and sordid when we really taste its last touch on life. The more we live and the greater our vitality the more acrid and squalid is that subtle, stealthy death which thwarts, poisons, corrodes and erases life. It is grey, leprous, and slow.

The worst and worldliest pain of death is something which cannot be medicined by the resources of art.

To know the change and feel it,
With none at hand to heal it,
Nor numbèd sense to steal it,
Was never told in rhyme.

For death, if thorough, is not sheer oblivion and Nirvana, but it does extinguish those ennobling resources and imaginations by which our higher senses conquer sense. And so we take the pain of a lower and unimaginitive sense, like taste, to express the utter deathliness of death. If we are to *feel* death, realise the deadliness of it, and yet master it, it must be by *Faith*, for we are beyond the help of imagination. Imagination, thank God, may carry us through death if it supply visions of heaven and glory vivid enough to submerge its most hideous fears. But it is only faith in God that can master it in

its ultimate form, its most desolate, squalid, benumbing and panic form, death in a moral waste, in spiritual solitude, impotence and failure, death with just enough feeling left to feel itself dead.

2. *The Taste of Death for Christ.*

Now, Christ tasted death (I press this from the fact, not from my text, which does not intend to emphasize the word as I do); He did not simply die like most. The whole efficacy of His death lay in that. He experienced the worst of it, touched the bottom of it, nay, went under that. He felt the horror, the sordid horror of it, the Godforsakenness of it, the earthiness, the deadness of it. No poetry of it helped him. He did not flush to anticipate the scene. There was no enthusiasm of battle, no sympathy of comrades, no shouting for a cause. There was no ideal beauty or power in it at the worst moment.

It was the pain symbolised by one of the lower senses, such as taste; a pain which could borrow no relief from imaginative aspects of the case. It was death with a past of failure, a lonely present, and a dark future. It was a dreary hell, a dismal swamp, an icy grave. It was like the death of an explorer, with broken nerve and evil memories, in the Arctic fog. If Christ sounded and tasted death to the uttermost, He conquered by principle a death like that. He knew "despair," as Calvin says of the cry on the cross; He knew for a space the modern malady of despair. And it makes nothing against this that it was a broken-hearted and resigned despair, and not a furious. Despair on the heroic scale is not furious. It certainly is not so in the modern mind. The worst despair is that which has sapped energy, so much that there is no vigour for fury. It has worn down the

soul so that it cannot rage. It may be bitter, but it is not frantic. It may even settle down, as in Matthew Arnold, into a wistful regret, whose foot falls soft upon the carpets of Anglican culture, and whose language is tuned to the Dorian mode of flutes and soft recorders. The despair of our day is not frantic, but it may be all the more desperate. It may be the despair of souls too underfed for vigorous hopelessness, and too pruned and trimmed for flat denial. There was much more pathos than frenzy in the Godforsakenness of it; and there was so much the more contact with the quiet hopelessness that blights the spiritual outlook of an overbusy age.

There is no sign that Christ was sustained in the crisis of that black hour by thoughts or visions of the long future. "Instead of the joy set before Him, He endured the cross." He was not supported by foreseeing what coming

blessing His death or agony would bring. That would have been an imaginative glory in whose wealth He might well have forgotten the horror of the hour. And, on the other hand, the pain of death was not for Him a dread or prevision of the future fires of hell. Heaven did not mitigate death, and hell did not sharpen it. The pain and horror were, as in our modern case, in death itself. If He was the death of death, it was because He tasted the death in death, and visited the caverns of horror that underlie the soul, and are seldom entered even by the dying man. He tasted the death of the universal soul — death eternal. It was the horror of the holy when He “became sin.” And this suggests another point where His death touches our modern attitude to it. We feel the pain and disappointment of death as impugning the moral goodness of God. To us pain and death seem a

moral outrage, a violent injustice done to the good. And it was moral outrage on the holy that gave the sting and the mean misery of death for Him. Only a great difference remains. The taste of death makes us think that it is a moral outrage *on* us—a tyranny; whereas He tasted it as the fruit of a moral outrage *by* us—a treason. And how prompt we are to accept Christ as a sympathiser with our oppressions, and how slow to take Him as the accuser of our sins!

The Moral or Second Death.

He tasted death as it can only be tasted by the moral delicacy of the High and Holy One, who feels Himself in the atmosphere of base, revolting sin, of moral atheism, ashiness, mustiness, torpor, dust. He bruised the serpent—a thing of the slime, The last sin He met was ignoble, devoid of that heroic rebellion which robs some evil of

its grossness and gives a Redeemer at least a worthy foe. A satyr may conquer at last the soul that once withstood a satan. The enemy that Christ met in death had nothing of greatness, perhaps, to nerve him and aid his valour. I am speaking only of the last form of evil that He faced. His conflict with evil did not begin with the passion week. At the outset, in the temptation, and during His strenuous ministry, Christ did feel that He was coping with the great Satan, a world-power, wickedness in high places. But him He vanquished, and saw him fall like lightning from heaven. It was a Satan falling even from his first fall—deformed by it, earthy and debased, that He met last. At the end there is no sign of that first grand antagonism; evil assails Him in a deadlier, more inveterate, even subtler form—yea, a form more inaccessible to Him because meaner, less Satanic, less Miltonic,

more modern and Mephistophelian. There is nothing in moral art more fine and true than the debasement which in "Paradise Lost" passes upon the sublime Satan after his rout, changing him, as he persists in his Satanism, from his noble form to the serpent shape, and turning his eloquence to a hiss. Base sin may be hard to destroy just in proportion as it is easy to resist. The noble heart cannot stoop to its plane. It is hard to slay what it is hard to meet. There is a sense in which it is hardest to cope with that which cometh and findeth nothing in you. There are evils to be destroyed for the world, and they are the hardest if they offer no temptation to ourselves. They cost us nothing to resist when they come to us, but it is all the more loathsome for us to go to them and destroy them. The trials that come are light beside those we go to. Therefore we pray,

“lead us not into temptation,” rather lead temptation up to us. The more we abhor them the more sickening it is to exterminate them, to seek their lair, breathe their air, kill them in their nest. There is sin which a Universal Redeemer cannot leave unslain, which yet does not so much break the sword of the Spirit as corrode it, like Grendel’s blood, in Beowulf. It uses the dagger instead of the sword, so to say. It poisons the wells, but does not take the field. It poisons the murky air, obscures the issue, and unnerves the arm. It is mephitic, the prince of the power of the air. It does not encounter, it envelopes. Its hideousness, like the sea monster, couches in the blinding cloud it makes. Satan himself, if he be still the arch-foe, is a sorry Satan, a demoralised, vulgarised Satan, a Satan of the latter days, whether Christ’s or ours, the Satan of the sneer and the everlasting No.

We might speculate how far Judas gave Christ the final type of the last enemy to be destroyed. With us, at least, this is the hardest kind of foe. The deadliest Satan is an ignoble Satan. It is the ignoble adversary, the base conflict, that steals most of the warrior's strength. The loathing of filth may be so great, says Nietzsche, that it prevents us from washing, *i.e.*, from justifying ourselves. It is a universe of petty evil, an infinity of moral meanness, that wears down his faith and puts him to the sorest test. It is the mean, petty fighter that the true protagonists most dread, the enemy too low for their sword, who lurks in the long grass with a nimble knife, with cunning, silence, *inuendo* and contempt, who buys your recruits with a bribe, meets your arguments by imputing motives, and damns your cause by smirching your character. The king of terrors is the old serpent,

the spirit of the slime, the great dragon, the wrinkled elder of the snakes. And within ourselves the worst enemy, a Saviour's despair, is that troop of base, cunning, almost impish, often reptile, temptations which make the conflict so mean that we have no stimulus to our moral best, nor vigilance enough to cope with the slow, sleepless, microbic perdition. So general and so fatal is this form of evil to-day that a great living genius has enthroned in the moral world of his art a power whose vast, but impish, providence is well served by the base passions and tendencies that thwart in all his characters the good and pure.

All sin runs out at last to mean sin. And it is the mean sinners that are the hardest to save, the last tax on a Redeemer, perhaps hopeless, intractable, in the end, even to his death. Their element is death at its deadliest. They haunt a miry suburb in the soul's

black country, of mean houses, half built and then deserted, "bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black death." To encounter that, to enter such benumbing, belittling, inert, penurious air is to taste the death in death. It is the very atmosphere of suicide. It is the region of moral and spiritual nausea.

Now, this is faith's opportunity. There is no living through that death but by faith, as force flags and vision fails. It is a Protestant salvation—by faith alone. Faith's last victory is not over a majestic foe, but over a shifty, sordid, stifling, paralysing foe. That is the last death to be destroyed in death. Your heroism is not in encountering the great temptations with the elation of strength, but in meeting the mean, incessant, wearing temptations through moral habit bred from past elations; when you have to drag yourself to the conflict, be-

numbed in vitality, and alive only in trained faith to the grace and goodness of a darkling God.

II.—DEATH FOR THE MILLION.

It was thus He tasted the death of the million, death "for every man," the death which is the death of all of us. He tasted the average man's death, not the hero's alone, the death of the little man, the failure and collapse of the man in a mean way of moral business, the cave-dwellers of the conscience. He tasted that in our moral death which is most universal, the commonness of it, the sorriness of it, what gives it access to all doors, and entrance at the very cracks and chinks in the rear of our nature. He tasted death from a generation of vipers. It was death by sickly candlelight in a little house in a back street among miles of them. It was death made cheap, death for the million.

1. *A World of Death.*

“For every man !” universal death. I have spoken of its meanness. I speak now of the universality of its meanness. And I will risk the charge of ambition by dwelling on the *vastness* of that death and of its results. The tone of much of our culture is robbing us of our sense of the *greatness* of Christ and His gospel. There is an affectation of subduedness and a modesty of mere good form, which clips the wings of faith lest preaching should pass beyond good talk or piety quit the region of sisterly affection.

How should a man feel who was alive, alone, in a world of the dead ? It is beyond imagination desolate. To be alone on the earth with none but the dead, go where you might ! It would be dreary and appalling enough for most men to be frozen up with one or two companions only in the Arctic Circle. To be there

alone in a world of monotonous thick-ribbed ice, in the darkness of a long night, in driving snow-storms—what could be more desolate and awful? One thing, perhaps; to know, while there, that you were the only living soul on the earth, that if you returned to warmer suns you would find everyone dead, that the whole earth was one vast cemetery in which you were the only man alive. That would be what Shelley calls “desolation deified.” Your mind could not bear this strain; you would go mad in the awful dreariness of such death. The taste of it would kill you physically. Is this imagery more awful or less awful than what Christ felt? Was Christ’s agony below imagination or above it, beyond it? too trifling or too solemn for it? His solitude was that of *the Life* amidst the dead world. The more He was the life the more power He had to feel death. Poverty means more to a

man used to plenty. For Him the soul of man was dead—in principle at least. I do not say the death was *total* as yet; there was still greatness and goodness among men, even among some who failed to see His. But it was *universal*; all were infected by it. There were none wholly great. And all were moving to death, only give the generations time. Every soul was dead compared with Him. It was a world of the dead so far as His life and purpose were concerned. Of the people there were none with Him. Morally, spiritually, He was the only soul truly alive. He had no man like-minded to care for their state. The light shone in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. He was Life Eternal, and all men refused Him. They were therefore dead. As a living man would be to a world of dead or dying men, so was Christ to the

world of living men. With all the energy and culture of the then world, it was yet dead in trespasses and sins, and the more dead that it did not know it. Christ stood alone, amid all the sunshine indeed that there is now, but amid universal moral death. To an eye like His this must be more awful than physical death. And the spectacle of the dead spiritual world around Him must be more awful than our imagination of any lonely survivor on the graveyard of the earth. That survivor would taste the bitterness of death as he could not if there were but one other living soul beside him. *We* can imagine, but he would *realise*. We can *imagine* a world of the dead, and see a certain grandeur in the solitary figure surviving in such a vast and ghastly desert. But there is a certain grandeur in such an imagination: and our shudder is not the actual chill of death, but an æsthetic

effect of something which is called before our mind's eye, yet outside of us and our reality. We are there with our poetry; and the survivor is not absolutely alone. But with Christ it was not imagination. He did not *view* a pictorial world of the dead. He was the life of men, and so He *realised* it. He died that death. It was not in imagination that He passed through such an experience. What He felt was not an æsthetic chill, nor a mere spectator's fear. He *realised* this moral death. It was less than actual sin in Him, but more than sympathy. He tasted it as really universal. This death of the million He died for the million. As it was *universal*, He was involved in it—involved, though not diseased, not captured. His life as Man was a real life, and He was bound to feel the last reality of man's deadness. And He alone *could* feel it. *They* were too dead in sin. Alone He ful-

filled the condition of feeling a moral death utterly universal, and therefore dreary, cold, loathsome, to such a soul as His. He so went down with His more than sympathy into the reality of our moral death that He was unsustained by any sense of the grandeur and sublimity of the situation. *Æsthetic* sympathy is but a parable of the moral sympathy of Christ. If He was to *taste* human death He must forego that imaginative vision of it in which its very universality seems grand. He did not simply behold death as being in every man; He tasted death for every man. He lived, died, that death. Universality when beheld with the eye of genius has a grandeur. But to *enter* this universal was to lose the sense of its universality in its deadness. It was to be caught in the chill of its mortality. He experienced the eclipse which made imaginative vision as impossible as men have felt it to be in extreme stages of

exhaustion and depression. He felt the universal blight. He "poured out His soul unto death." What a phrase! As if the limpid water which transfigured every pebble ran off and left but the muddy bed and débris of death. He parted with what men call "soul," or fine insight, and took the state of the commonest, dreariest man or woman who has been robbed of everything—fortune, faculty, and feeling—except faith.

Dying for every man means that He shared in soul (though not in conscience) a universal moral death. And to enter *universal* death is to *taste* its reality and become its prey, to shudder and *dwindle* in a sense, to feel the fog and sick poison of that dismal world on the scale of His own great soul, to feel on Him the curse of that sin which His soul loathed, which embraced Him, but found in Him no consent. The death *for* all men was a death

from all men. And He survived this world of death, and He conquered for every man by nothing imaginative, but by the quenchless power and vitality of the one thing left Him—of His faith in God. The taste of universal death means all the world-pessimism which either ends downwards in universal suicide, or, mounting by faith, obtains universal Redemption. If Christ had not gained that victory human history would simply have evolved universal destruction. It was the final, absolute, universal dilemma of the human soul—if you will think to the bottom of things.

2. *Our Fatal Avoidance of Death.*

I anticipate the complaint that I linger too long and insist too much upon the dull, mean misery of soul involved in the taste of universal death. I may be told that it is not well to dwell on such terror—that the saving work is done, and we are now in the realm

of the Holy Ghost and the joy of salvation. May I say, in reply, first this, that we could not possibly dwell there in the way of habitual residence. We may dwell on it without dwelling in it. Next, that Christ Himself only tasted this death. He did not pass His life, or any large portion of it, in it. He certainly did realise its awful quality. He did not merely contemplate or imagine it. But as to quantity, or extent, it did not cover His life. He descended into this hell, but He did not dwell there. It was but a taste, though it was a taste, and not a sip.

But let me say this also, that I think by our avoidance of such subjects we are losing in spiritual sensibility, spiritual experience, and so in spiritual power. I am sure that the attention so freely given by the Church to-day to grace in the Greek sense, to the beauty of Christ, the beauty of the Cross, the beauty of holiness, has

done something to impair real spiritual feeling, to produce, not levity, but religious mediocrity and inadequacy. It is too æsthetic in its nature. It does not search, harrow, and elicit the soul enough. It does not plough deep enough for the true crop of the Cross and the fruits of the Spirit. Not to realise hell is not to prize the Cross. Am I right in thinking that specific and profound Christian experience is growing rarer even where Christian sensibility is by no means dull? Are we parting with soul in the race for souls? We do seem too much accustomed to-day to translate the love of Christ into the terms of human affection, and the Cross of Christ into the terms of human surrender, or into the law of philosophic reconciliation. We treat all love as God's love by a certain juggle with the word divine. We seek the perfection of love in sacrifice instead of in redemption, in sacri-

fice for the beloved's good instead of sacrifice for the rebel's salvation. We identify renouncing love with redeeming love. We idealise reciprocal love, and call it divine, instead of reading God's revelation of His love as dying for the ungodly. This is love original and absolute. Hereby know we love at its source. If we translate let us translate from that. Let us translate from the original, and not back from a translation. Let us work downward from Love's own account of itself in Christ. Let us begin at the beginning, or, however we translate, at least let us interpret in the right way. Let us interpret man by God, love by grace. The real revelation is not in the cradle, but in the Cross; not in the home, but in the Church. We should interpret our human affection by the love of God who first loved us, our life's afflictions by the sufferings of Christ, and the eternal process by His

awful conflict. It would do more for our spiritual sensibility itself. Have not the tenderest men you knew, the men of real moral tenderness, been sterner than most of the merely gentle and kind? It would certainly do more for our Christian strength and character. With a great price we obtained our freedom. I know it is useless and mischievous to paint horrors, to dwell on suffering as suffering, just as it is morally worthless to make sacrifices merely for the sake of sacrifice. But it is quite necessary that we should be recalled time after time to a true sense of the sufferings of Christ, and detained upon the nature of His death.

And by a true sense I mean a sense germane to the real spiritual situation of our age, and to its mental dialect, a sense relevant to its moral tone, and to its idea of death, not in our own circle or communion or country, but in Europe, say. There was a time

when it was more congenial to the condition of society to dwell much on the physical sufferings of Christ. It is the case still in the Romance races, and in Catholic lands. It was the habit of that middle age when it was a rude and full-blooded Europe, of incessant bloodshed and coarseness and cruelty. And the custom survived even into Protestant times. Now we must always worship and preach the precious blood of Christ. But there is a way of speaking about the blood of Christ and dwelling on it which is not only distasteful but, what is worse, is meaningless to our time. Few of us see bloodshed, as the Jews did in sacrifices, and the Middle Ages in war. If the pavement is stained by an accident, it is the business of society to cleanse it from sight at once. The language of blood does not come home to us as it did once. But the horror of death does, though it is in other

forms, in other terms. I do not think the old preachers overdid the dark and awful side of the death of Christ. I do not think it is overdone in the attention of the Churches who keep a rigid Lent and a solemn Good Friday. I only say they are apt to seek the horror and the solemnity in the wrong place. They pursue it on its physical side, and the world has moved away from physical terror to psychical. It is the moral horror of death that comes home to us to-day. It is not writhing agony, for we have hospitals and anæsthetics ; but it is the mute, lonely, soulless misery of a faithless, hopeless, loveless round of drudgery, failure, and lacerated life. It is not the grief of broken limbs in a struggle with executioners, but of broken hearts in the struggle for existence. Or it is (as in France) the moral nausea of sated lust, of love idolised, then debased, then a scourge, then the madness of

spiritual thirst, and national, universal death. It is not the horror of a bleeding frame, of a crucifixion, but the horror of a "grey, void, lampless, deep, unpeopled world." Yes, the colour of death to our modern mind is not red, but grey. It is death in a desert, not a battle. It is the death horror of an age familiar with shaking creeds, iron laws, and the struggle for existence, with tales of shabby streets, mirthless laughter, and the *epnui* of coarse wealth. It is the horror of an age whose chief trouble is not pain but the fear of it, not acute agony but dull and stony woe, not furious despair but incurable melancholy amid unexampled resource. It is a Hamlet age, with

Power to transmute all elements, but
lack
Of any power to sway that fatal skill.

It may be good for us, good for
our spiritual sensibility, good for
our Christian heart, that we should

apprehend the reality of Christ's death in terms of the spiritual dialect of our time. We refuse to bow to the spirit of the age, but we ought at least to speak the language of the age, and address it from the Cross in the tone of its too familiar sorrow. It is a mean death that dominates the day, closing much grim and sombre life. The very Titans are tired. The gloom of the pessimist is but the shadow of this weary age, the exhibition of its secret grief. He reveals the thoughts of many hearts, except of course those who resolutely turn away from such things in a hearty optimism which is temperament rather than faith. Many who wait on the Lord only maintain their strength. They do not renew it. They do not run, nor soar. Has the death of Christ nothing in common with that dim vexation, sheer exhaustion, and spiritual dreariness which is our modern death? It is not the death

of wrong faith, but of no faith. Was His not a spiritual ebb, a spiritual death, far more than a physical? Was it not the curse, though not the experience, of unfaith that fell on His faithful soul? The physical death only showed forth the spiritual. It was there that the value lay. And a spiritual death, in absolute obedience, amid an atmosphere of unfaith, when it is really tasted and not merely sipped, means fog and gloom sour and chill, formless fears and failing force—no visions, no raptures, no triumphs, no flush of energy, no heroic glow. That was the blood of Christ. And you cannot dwell too much on the blood of Christ so long as you are sure it was Christ's blood, the Lamb of God carrying the sin of the world. You cannot dwell too long on the death of Christ, however you conceive it, so long as you see it through the resurrection light as the grace of God. You

cannot think too much of the universality of death so long as it reveals the infinite universality of grace. Where death abounds there does grace much more abound. A worn and pessimist Europe may be nearer the Kingdom of God than the cruel, lusty, military Europe that creates it. The gloom of to-day may be also nearer the Cross than the pitiless faith of the "Ages of Faith." The blindness when things have been too much for faith is better than the blindness of a faith which will not see at all. Nay, I am not sure that it is not nearer to it than the amateur optimism of mere temperament, or of what is called sound British sense; nearer, too, than a reconciliation which is only philosophic and rational, and does not feel the tragedy enter its soul at all.

He tasted, then, universal death. The wide empire of death went deep into His soul. His soul itself died. It is very tragic, very terri-

ble; as a historic spectacle awful, as a psychological spectacle profound and unique.

But where is the religion of it? Where is its Gospel? That a man should die for men, die in spiritual horror—it is fine, great; but how does it help us, who are dying too, to see the greatest of the sons of men caught and crushed in the whirl of the same wheel as rolls us into mean dust?

So we are led to the real Gospel and glory of the situation.

III.—DEATH AS GRACE.

By the grace of God He tasted universal death. There is a death which is a grace of God. The last mystery of death is the mystery of grace. Behind it is not only the awe of a world unseen, but the depth and wonder of the riches of the wisdom and love of all men's God. Death as the expression of the grace of God becomes neither

a penalty nor a problem, but a promise. It is, therefore, the centre, not of a philosophy, but of a religion, a faith.

1. *The Exegesis.*

You may suggest, perhaps, that the allusion to the grace of God refers not to Christ's bitter taste of death, but to the fact that it was for every man. But there are two things in the passage itself which show that the grace to Christ in His death is here meant: first, the text goes back on the previous phrase, "the suffering of death," picks that up, and enlarges it. It is the death of Christ, His suffering and the glory and perfection of it that is the theme; that is what is being traced to the grace of God, not the vicarious nature of it. It is the blessing of Christ's death to Himself, as the path to His perfecting as Redeemer—it is that which is the theme, and not the blessing of it to us.

And then, in the second place, this word grace is taken up in turn in the following verse, (it is all woven music, phrase issuing from phrase) where it says, "For it became Him, the Lord of all, to make the Redeemer perfect by suffering." It became, it befitted, a gracious God, not to bring many sons to glory, not to make the Son the Saviour, but to make the Saviour a perfect Saviour by the extremity of suffering. He gave the Saviour the last grace, the perfection of death. The mystery to a Jew was that God should not only permit, but require, His Messiah, His favourite, His King, to suffer and die. The writer has learnt enough of Paul to say boldly that this was not the lack of grace, but the supreme grace, gift and privilege. It was reserved by God for His Son, nay, by God for Himself. It became the Lord of all to die for all. In conferring death on Christ the

Father took the Son into His own unapproachable grace and perfection of giving Himself for the world to the uttermost. The death of Christ was a function, and not merely a commission, of the supreme power, grace and glory. It was an act of God, and not merely of God's agent. God did not send the Son, He came as the Son. What reconciled the world was God in Christ. God does not suffer by deputy, or sacrifice by substitute. It is not His prerogative to receive sacrifices greater than any He makes. He does not delegate redemption; He redeems in the Son with whom He is one. It is no Christian God who sits steamed by the incense of heroic woe or filled with an æsthetic delight in the tragedy of men. The God of Jesus Christ is more of a giver than a receiver. When He gave His Son He gave more, and at more cost, than any but the Son could repay. His blessedness is not to be self-

contained, and in Himself enough, but it is to seek and to save. It is more Godlike to give than to receive even life.

2. *Death as the Gift and Grace of God.*

It was by the grace of God He tasted death. And I mean death was there in God's grace to Christ Himself, and not simply to us. You do not suppose that the grace of God only came *through* Christ and was not to Christ, that it was ever withdrawn from Christ for our sakes? The face was withdrawn, but never the grace. How could it ever save us if it failed Him? This bitter, dismal taste of death, it was God's grace to Christ. When He tasted death He tasted how gracious the Lord was. "God gave me blindness," says Dr. Moon, "as a talent to be used for His service, that I might see the needs of those who could not see." So to

Christ God gave the grace of a universal death. "This is my beloved Son," was said to Him in the exaltation of His Baptism ; and immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. That was the immediate effect and sign of the Father's good pleasure and total trust. The Father could trust Him in the worst desert of the soul. And amid all Christ knew that and held to it. He knew that when He knew nothing else. All thought of the grandeur of death, the heroism of dying, the beauty of sacrifice, the sweetness of loving devotion, all that fell from His darkened mind. Moral imagination failed, but moral fidelity did not. Obedience stood. He obeyed the Father even when His love of His brethren had received the shock of desertion. He was never much dependent on visions, but if ever He was they failed Him now. Death blanched them, and they

died. But one thing death did not master or quench ; it was His faith in the grace of God amid this moral mephitis, the fixed obedience of His will amid the stupefying contagion of universal sin, and the failure of hopes and powers. Death never got the better of Christ's faith in the grace of God. The eclipse of feeling never unhinged His loving will, or His obedience to that grace whatever its form. There was a value and a grace in death which He did not feel, but for which He trusted God ; He did not see, but He knew, that He could do nothing of such worth for the kingdom as to succumb and die. The Father would have taken Him from the cross had He asked it —though that would have lost all at the moment which turned all. But He did not ask it. His faith and will held sure when His heart was dim and broken. Death could hide the Father or remove Him, but could not change Him. He did

not ask it. He could not ask it. He honoured in His faithfulness unto death a holy law and judgment which were as precious to God as His Holy Son or His unholy prodigal. God would not be God if He loved His own holy nature less than man. Then the Divine death might have been an act of pity, but not of grace. It was by the grace of God that Christ died. It was by the grace of God He tasted death, emptied the cup, realised a world of death. Such at least was Christ's own faith. The darkness was the shadow of the Almighty wing. It was the grace of God that put the cross there—the cross as a state of soul and act of will—together with all the glory that only the cross could win. It is a hard saying, but is it not true? The soul's death and agony of Christ was a grace bestowed on Him by God. He was the captain of all those that have the grace of

dying. "Ye know *the* grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor." Being rich in life yet He became poor unto death. Like all His graces that, too, was God's gift to Him, God's grace. The humiliation of the Cross was the Father's greatest gift to His Son, save one—His resurrection; and that was but its completion. Do not doubt that it was a grace of God to Him. It was a gift that He alone could carry. Heaven was peopled with millions, who would have vied with each other for a grace from their King like this—to be sent to die for men—had any death but the Son of God availed. But none of them could by any means redeem, nor give a ransom. The redemption of the soul is costly, and must be let alone by them for ever. It was the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Death cannot be an evil," says Schiller, "being so universal."

That is a poet's optimism—the optimism of a philosophic poet who did not live with the miserable many. It is a fine saying. There are stages of culture to which it comes broad, profound, and beautiful; yet it is not true. It is hardly even a half truth. It is not true of pain. It is not true to the moral sense of the race; it is not true to its most universal experience, nor to the experience of those most to be regarded. It was not true to the moral soul of that Hebrew race which produced the living conscience of mankind; it was not true to the experience of Buddhism; it is not true to the philosophy which at least has a heart for the world's sorrow and a conscience not to be soothed by the dialectic of pure reason, or the process of the pure idea. I mean the humane and hopeless philosophy of Pessimism, so gloomy because so much more full of heart and insight than of faith.

And it is not true to the faith and experience of the Christian Church. The universality of death is an aggravation of its evil; the commonness of death is but the increase of its bitterness. There is but one condition in which death is not an evil. It is when it becomes the supreme organ of revelation; then it is more than revelation; it delivers men from itself. It is redemption. Death is the last evil and enemy till it become the supreme organ of the grace of God in the cross of Christ. The death of Christ has redeemed death itself. It has immortalised mortality. The last enemy becomes the greatest vassal. Saul turns Paul. And man's extremity is God's opportunity.

3. *The Fascination of Death.*

To many of the greatest there has been a fascination, yea, even a distinction, about death as the *locus* of the great secret, as the

final problem whose answer answers all. Where the carcase was there were the eagles ever. Even if they could not solve it they had an instinct that the solution of humanity lay there in what seemed its dissolution. It is our weakness, not our strength, that consents to the agnosticism of the grave, to death as complete erasure. Faith and philosophy, as well as valour, feel this spell, this call to wring power from death, and wrest meat from the eater. To take the philosophies only, it is those that feel its fascination, yea, its misery, most that are most akin in feeling to the sympathies of faith. I have referred to systematic pessimism. Christianity is not pessimist. But it has attachments in pessimism which it has not in optimism. There is more sympathetic affinity. To grapple with death is at least to shake the door of grace. The optimist philosophy, whose watch-words are reason and reconcilia-

tion, does not seize the public need like that whose note is will and its process Redemption. There is a realism and a humanity in the latter, pessimist though it be, which savours more of the true Cross. The way to the soul's final greatness lies through its misery rather than through its success. The grace of God comes home most mightily to those who have looked to it through the desperations, and not only the contradictions of life. The misery of the soul never seemed so terrible and hopeless as it did to the eye of grace. It was the pessimism of God that moved Him to redeem. "When there was no eye to pity and no arm to save, then His own eye pitied and His own arm brought salvation." The light that saved was the light that best showed the hell it saved from. For this reason Christianity can never be pessimist; because we never see the very worst until we have been saved from it into the

best, and view it with the eyes of its Saviour. None can realise hell but a redeemer, however many may suffer it. The pity of the Saviour is more than all pity of Buddha, or the ingenious self-pity of the modern soul. It pities from its height of holiness a sinfulness which is much more pitiful than the sorrow felt by the humane heart of a sympathetic man. He who emerges above man feels man more than he who is immersed in man. And of course he feels more than the man who is immersed in himself. Must he not also feel more than a total humanity could feel with nothing but itself to be immersed in?

Unless above himself he can
Erect himself how mean a thing is man.

To be lost *in* self—is it not to be lost *to* self? And if this occur on the scale of the whole race great must be the fall thereof.

Yes, there is a fascination in

death—else there were no heroes and no martyrs—and it does not exist for the human soul alone. For even to the Divine mind itself there was this attraction of the Cross, this invitation, this challenge from death, this insight of death's resources under compulsion, this power to pluck the jewel life from the jaws of death. For God Himself there was this sense of opportunity, of capability in death to be the organ of grace, the way of glory, and the perfecting of the soul. But the resources were not in death itself, but in the use Godhead could make of it. The universal Grace, seeking its opening, seized on the thing in man most universal—more universal even than love. And that was death. For there are some who love not, but none who do not die. Death and grace made one salvation. The evening and the morning are one day. Darkness and light are both alike to God, and

together involve the revolution of the world. The universality of death was the only experience adequate to the universality of grace. It was the only experience wide and solemn enough. That it was a universal enemy was but another fascination to a divine and holy love that felt in itself all power to cope with human ill. If evil was to be destroyed it should be mastered in its great stronghold, its most paralysing form, its fortress in the dismal fen. The wages of sin should become the seed of holiness, and what sin dreaded most faith should trust and use still more. Love, to appear exceeding lovely, dared to die. It consented to weakness and horror as the condition of all might. All! "All things are delivered to me of My Father." And at the bottom of this Pandora gift was death. His greatness was a doom. He was buffeted in kindness. Love tasted death that

it might overpass love and be worshipped as grace. The depth of need was sounded by the fulness of power. And the range of universal death should be at least no less than the realm of universal grace. Nothing the heart could experience should be beyond the Saviour whose triumph the heart should trust.

4. *Death and Grace as Experience and Trust.*

Experience and trust, death and grace—can they be co-equal powers?

The trouble of the time is this—that we are more universal in our thought and experience than we are in our faith. Our experience is wider than our faith. Death is wider than grace. Our ideas are wider than our real religion. Our culture is wider than our actual creed. Our crises overwhelm our Christ. Men range the world with ships, trains, and wires. They range the universe with microscope, telescope, and spectrum.

They explore human nature with the aid of genius, and they go far in that knowledge of the soul which comes of culture. History and geography, science and literature, serve us as they never did before. We are cosmopolitan, but are we really universal? We go far, but do we go deep? We have more experience than we have faith to carry. If masses are under-educated, masses are over-educated. Their resources submerge their conscience. And their conscience itself outruns their ethics. Men see a right which they cannot make a habit, or pass into public use. Their knowledge of the world is so great that it actually belittles their world. The more they know of it the less they think of it. Prosperity brings leanness of soul and meanness of ideal. The more they know of men the less they respect man. The more they see the less they believe. The more their experience the less their faith in the great

faiths, hopes and gospels. They like broad views, often because these seem to make less demand on their bankrupt souls.

Men come, for instance, to know the dark races as a colonist might. They have dealings with them. And the experience is too much for faith many a time. The black man who tries their English patience, they say, is incurable. Christianity only makes him more intractable and more insufferable. He is not the man for whom Christ died. Missions are a mistake. They must make way for politics. The apostle shall go no further than the diplomatist allows. And it would simplify trade much if he did not go at all. Let him practise philanthropy and so reduce the rates at home. Christianity is a gospel only for the superior races. Well, that is the universality of mere experience conquering the universalism of faith. And in this respect the villager of faith and love

with his missionary-box is more universal than the travelled peer, the colonial colossus, the imperialist millionaire.

Another man goes sympathetically into the dark places of Europe, of England. He finds rascality and suffering such as he had never dreamed of. He is filled with impotent rage against the order of society. It is oppression, misery and death everywhere, except among the prosperous. And even among them it is only a worse and more heartless death. His faith was only enthusiasm, and it fails him. It was only sympathy, milk of human kindness, and it goes sour. His experience is too much for his faith. For him the grace of God is not upon sorrow and death. The cross weighs down the very Redeemer. The cross is on the Redeemer; the Redeemer is not upon the cross. The cross is crushing the Redeemer; He does not rise from His cross.

Or another man, ardent for well-doing, falls into disease. He is powerless to help in any good. He lingers in the misery of impatience and impotence. His depression deepens. He feels but earth's sorrow. He tastes death daily, but he never assimilates it. He is never reconciled to it. It is because he is not reconciled by it. He lies on a mattress-grave. He is not transfigured on a mountain apart. Christ even seems to him to die in the common martyrdom, not in the universal Redemption. Death is not surmounted by grace. It is not the organ of grace. His experience has mastered his faith. His ideas are more universal than his creed. His heart is greater than his God. He carries in his sympathy a larger world than he lives in by his faith. And there is more curse for him in this world than grace, just in proportion as he is in earnest. And it is all because he has taken everything more

in earnest than he has taken Christ. He despises the theologians, it may be, but he lets them rule him and even enslave him. Because he rejects their christ he lets himself be without a christ, or he consents to an ineffectual christ. The theologians have, at least, this advantage as yet, that they have the effectual Christ—the Christ that works. The non-theological christ is popular; he wins votes; but he is not mighty; he does not win souls; he does not break men into small pieces and create them anew. The martyrdom of Christ was never so respected as it is to-day. The name of Jesus, they say, is cheered in the East-end, and is no bad passport in the West. The clergy are socially welcome. The religion of suffering has even literary patronage; there is money in it at the theatres under the sign of the Cross; and the Church, as a branch of the public service and

the social order, is treated with some deference in the writers' clubs. But it is a spectacular Christ throughout. And His kingdom is not spectacular. It cometh not with observation. It is within you. Nor is the spectacle of Christ on His cross in itself enough to lift men from their misery, break them of self, or release them from the malady of their time. The crucifix, as the apotheosis of sorrow, may even be but the greatest of earth's burdens. It is possible so to view the Cross as to carry more of the world's woe into it than we receive from it of redeeming grace. Nay, it is natural to do so. It is the natural thing to recognise in the dying Christ but a fellow-sufferer (even if He be the classic one), a fellow-victim of the death we die. Death is wider to include Christ than Christ is to include death. We see easily the misery of the world upon the Cross of Christ. What it is not easy to see is the

Cross of Christ upon the misery,
and upon the misery *of the world*.
It is no natural vision that sees
that.

Romantic Religion and Tragic.

I speak of the misery of the world. I have spoken throughout of the misery of the world. I have heard the whole creation groan. I have presumed on an instructed sympathy which does not measure human life by our own lot, or pronounce upon destiny just by our own experience, or our friends'. Who does not know the fatal trivialist who makes every discussion of principles or ideas vanish in the sand as he narrates a series of petty incidents from his petty career; or smothers it in a dust storm of his relatives ground fine. The relevant thing is not this and that man's groping. The great Scripture is not of private interpretation. I have been speaking of the soul as the human soul, not

as this or that man's experience. And if I have spoken of a misery which is not in this land organised into a creed, of a squalor which has only partially infected our literature from other lands, why is it otherwise among us? Why, because of a freedom to worship, think, act, and combine, chiefly due to the Free Churches and their witness of free grace. When I picture the world-woe as it comes home to Church-ridden lands, or to the genius of unfaith, I say that it is not easy to see the Cross of Christ upon the misery and sin of the world—it is not natural, it is entirely supernatural, it is not human, it is quite superhuman. It is a miraculous vision that sees in that Martyr more than a martyr—a Healer; and in the Healer more—the Redeemer. To see sin, sorrow, and death continually under the Cross, to see the grace of God triumphing over them in it, is the very soul and victory of faith. It is possible

to see a beauty in sacrifice which draws the young imagination that way bent into a certain enthusiasm and imitation of the Cross. The high, but hollow, naturalism of George Eliot had room for the action on Maggie Tulliver of Thomas à Kempis. But that is a faith too æsthetic or too subjective for the stay and victory of the thorough-going soul over the last moral horrors of the world. In London, in one twenty-four hours, there is more, if we knew it, than a faith like that could bear. And even when we come to very close quarters with Christ crucified the savour of the Cross may but deepen the sad tone of many a morbid soul; it may fix the hue and habit of eclipse upon the pious heart, in spite of fitful gleams of cheer and joy. There is much more in the Cross than such a darkling faith has fathomed. The infinite, ultimate love of God is there. The gift and grace of God for the whole

world is there. It is not simply nor chiefly the love of Christ for His brethren that is in the Cross. That was indeed uppermost in Christ's life; but in His death that is not direct but indirect; and the primary thing is Christ's obedience to God, and His action, therefore, as the channel of God's redeeming love. It is the love of God for the godless, loveless, hating world that is there. And it is there, not simply expressed but effected, not exhibited but enforced and infused, not in manifestation merely, but in judgment and decision. The last judgment, in the sense of the ultimate Divine verdict on sin, is already by. It was passed in the Cross of Christ, where sin was condemned once for all. All future judgment is but the working out of this. The prince of this world is already judged. He acts to-day as a power, indeed, but only as a doomed power. His sentence went out in the Cross. And

he knows it. Humanity was rescued from him there. The crisis of man's spiritual destiny is there. The *opus operatum* of history is there. It is not simply revelation, but revelation as redemption. It does not *show*, it *does*. It is not displayed for refining effect upon our moral nature, it is in action for our spiritual recreation and regeneration. Do not empty such words as these of their fundamental and searching significance. Beware of the watering of the Christian stock. Do not let the litterateurs and poets capture, pare, and monopolise them to fit their range of experiences; as if renunciation were the Cross, sacrifice were faith, and purification were the Holy Ghost. The Christ is He who came by water and by blood; not by water only but by water and by blood; not for purification so much as for salvation, nor for refinement so much as for redemption. When

we read of the rowdy American hero that

Christ isn't going to be too hard
On a man that died for men,

it is clever poetry, but it is mawkish piety; it has the blight of affectation and unreality upon it, like much literary heroism. Faith does not lend itself to literature except with geniuses of the very first rank, like Dante or Milton, to whose commanding intellects theology is the envisagement of the things most gracious, searching, and sublime. Redemption by the grace of God in the Cross of Christ, regeneration by the Spirit of God in His Church—these are things deeper than literature can go or philosophy expound. There are few dangers threatening the religious future more serious than the slow shallowing of the religious mind towards the literary shore, the stranding of faith, and the bleaching of

its ribs—the desiccation, by even religious culture, of words which won their wealth from experiences stirred by the New Testament when it was not viewed as literature at all, but as the very Word of God. *Tendimus in altum*. Our safety is in the deep. The Tazy cry for simplicity is a great danger. It indicates a frame of mind which is only appalled at the great things of God, and a senility of faith which fears that which is high. Men complain that they are jaded and cannot rise to such matters. That may mean that the matters of the world absorb all the energies of the great side of the soul, that Divine things are no more than a comfort. And if so, it means much for the future of religion, and much that is ominous. And the poverty of our worship amid its very refinements, its lack of solemnity, poorly compensated by an excess of tenderness and taste, is the fatal index of the peril.

We do need more reverence in our prayer, more beauty in our praise, less dread of tried and consecrated form. But still more do we want the breathless awe, and the stammering tongue, and the solemn wonder, and the passionate gratitude, which are the true note of grace, and the worship of a soul plucked from the burning and snatched by a miracle from the abyss. We want the new song of those who stand upon the rock, taken from the fearful pit and the miry clay, with the trembling still upon them and the slime still moist. We want the devotion of men whom grace found, and scarcely saved, in the jaws of death, and took from the belly of hell. We want more joy, but more of the joy of men who have tasted death either in their own conscience or in the communion of their Redeemer's. We need it to make Faith what in some of its popular forms it is ceasing in any

imperial way to be—a power and a passion in authority among the passions and powers of the race. We want a Gospel to give conscience might, where it is owned to have right. We could dispense with some of its pathos if we changed it for more of its power. There is no persuasiveness like that of men who have known the terror of the Lord. There is no reason so authoritative as supernatural grace—amazing and incomprehensible.

5. *The Mystery of Iniquity and the Miracle of Mercy.*

The mystery of iniquity who can understand? Sin is utterly irrational. Death none can comprehend, for we can question none who have returned from the grave. Sorrow is hard to bear, and harder still to explain; for the good and pure have an ache of their own in a world like this when all the common sources of pain are stilled.

But to comprehend is not to forgive, to explain is not to redeem. The grace of God is not only unaccountable, but if it could be accounted for it would cease to be sovereign grace. Faith is in its very nature faith in a miracle. To challenge miracle without leaving in the net result a profounder sense of the essential miracle of grace and fate is poor service to the Gospel or the soul. It is miracle far more than reason that feeds the soul. No treatment of the miracles should ignore that; no fate of theirs can alter that. It is the evangelical nerve of Christianity and the marrow of the Gospel. To give up miracle is to leave the field to magic. God's attitude to such as we are is an eternal anomaly, and the Christian life is miraculous or it is nothing. Atonement ceases to be religious when it is offered as explanation. The justifier can never justify himself at any human bar. Nothing can justify justify.

ing grace. Sin, grief, death, and grace make a standing rebuke to our lust of lucidity, our rational religion, and our passion to explain. The Lord of death and grace does not explain till we are inexplicably blessed in Him; and then our thought is for ever far in the wake of our faith and our worshipping love.

Evolution and Revolution.

Do not turn, then, from the awful horror of the Cross, or you will lose the solemn power of it. Do not say it is morbid to look so much on the Cross in its contact with human despair. It is the one death which is charged with more grace and power for the human soul than all the blithe and vigorous enterprise of the world. It is the one death which has taken control of human life; as, indeed, it is the ruling and interpreting point for the life of Christ Himself. It has made the whole of

human history simply an ante-chamber of the spiritual world; and the grace of God revealed in the Cross contains more of His nature and purpose than all our inductions from the experience of the race. It has graven upon the soul the conviction not only that the Cross is for man, but that man is for the Cross. The grace of God in the death of Christ has, indeed, revealed the principle of sacrifice as an essential, or even supreme, factor in human progress. The Cross is there for man in that sense. It is the classic case of the sacrifice that makes human greatness. But it is much more than that, and has done more. It has changed the nature of man's greatness. It has changed the spiritual centre of gravity, and moved it outside of humanity altogether. It has changed man's own spiritual place. It has made man a contributor to the Cross even more than the Cross a

contributor to man. It has made man owe himself, and not merely his religious progress, to the Cross and God's grace in it. Man belongs by right to the Cross even more than the Cross to man. The whole question of the time as to a spiritual world concerns not so much its existence, but its place. The day is over when materialism could challenge its existence, except among those scientists who are not thinkers, but only the skilled artisans of the intellect or the chief clerks of mind. The better culture of the age has outgrown the negation of a spiritual realm, and the question is as to its place. Does it belong to man, or does man belong to it? Is humanity its king or its subject? Is it to glorify man, or man to glorify it? Is it a department of human culture, swelling the triumph of a humanity still on the summit of things? Or is it a world which holds man,

and which all his culture obeys? We raise that question to a higher place, and we make it more definite, when we ask it about the Cross of Christ and its grace of God. But it is the same question. It is always the chief question of the age that is put and answered by the Cross. Does the Cross belong to man, or does man belong to the Cross? Is the grace of God only a factor in human evolution, or is it the condition of all evolution, and its destiny as well, its source and goal in one? Is the Cross *a* grace or *the* grace? Is faith in Christ a department of the soul, or is it the total energy of the soul? Does it serve the soul, or is it the soul in service? Is the Church but one of the public services? Is Christ a sectional interest, or is He the soul's new world? Did He die to promote human welfare on the noblest of natural lines, or to redeem us to a new nature? Did the Cross

mean a new departure or a new creature? Evolution or Revolution? Is the Cross the spiritualising of the old man or the creation of a new man? Is grace the transfiguration of nature, or the foundation of a kingdom on the ruins of nature? Yea, within the Church itself, within the Christianity of the time, the question must arise. Among those who believe the Gospel the issue must be sharpened, and put thus: Does the Gospel carry the Cross, or the Cross carry the Gospel? In the beginning was—what? the Word or the Deed? Is it the gospel of love that carries in its hand the act of grace, or is it the act of grace that carries for the soul the gospel of love? Is the prime object of faith Fatherly love or Redeeming grace?

To questions like these there is but one answer when we come to the core of faith. Man belongs to the Cross much more than the

Cross belongs to man. Christ did not die to exhibit, but to act; nay, to create. He did not die to show how deep and fine the Cross was in human nature, if we would be true to ourselves; but to effect in human nature a total change and bring to pass its death into a new life, its life into a new lord. The new master made a new man, and not a reformed man. The Cross has far more claim upon man than man upon the Cross. The poetry of man uses the Cross for man; for its chief interest is man. But the religion of man uses man for the Cross; for its ruling interest is the grace of God, the holy God, the Redeemer. And in the grace of God there lies a destiny for the soul through faith which, as it was achieved by faith when all high imagination had failed and died, so transcends all that imagination can surmise, art body forth, or imperious wills achieve. It is the Cross which carries the Gospel,

not the Gospel the Cross. In the beginning was the Word as eternal Deed. There is no real revelation of the Gospel of Fatherly love but in the grace of forgiveness by the Cross. Revelation to such as we is impossible, except as Redemption. The sense for it has to be created. It is not revelation that redeems so much as redemption that reveals. The soul realises its greatness less in what is shown it of the love of God than in what is done for it by the grace of God.

6. *The Greatness of Human Nature
and of Its Redemption.*

Oh, we are shut up into a greatness which is not of us at all!

Life is great, and death is great, and love is stronger than death; but great beyond all is the grace which is eternal life to us from the dead, and a new self beyond ourselves.

The world is great and the soul is great, and great is the soul's

mastery of the world ; but greater than soul can say is the grace that masters the soul and recreates the will for a life beyond life.

We inherit greatness and breathe it. Earth and sky and day and night ; stars in the naked heavens, breathings of wind, and the coming of spring ; hill and plain, rolling tracts, and river and sea ; the mist on the long, wet moor, and above it the black, baleful cloud ; fleets and camps, cities and realms ; valour and power, science, trade, churches, causes, arts, charities ; the fidelities of peace and the heroisms of war, the rhythm of order and the stream of progress ; the generations that go under and the civilisations that survive ; the energies unseen, the vanished past, the forgotten and the unforgettable brave ; the majesty of the moral hero and the splendour of the public saint ; agonies, love, and man's unconquerable mind—Oh, we have a great world, great

glories, great records, great prospects and great allies! We inherit greatness, and we inhabit promise. The capitalised legacies of the past and the condensed suffering of the many become in us an instinct of greatness which moves us to an unapprehended destiny. The brave possess the earth, and the noble are at home in the glorious natural world.

Winds blow and waters roll
Strength to the brave, and power,
and deity.

But as our sun rises there is a rising cloud. In the moving soul there is a frail seam, an old wound, a tender sore. The stout human heart has a wearing ache and a haunting fear. There is a hollow in the soul's centre, in its last hold no fortress, and in its sanctuary no abiding God. A vanity blights the glory of time, a lameness falls on the strenuous wing, our sinew shrinks at certain touches, and we halt on our thigh;

pride falters, and the high seems low, and the hour is short, and the brief candle is out, and what is man that he is accounted of? There is a day of the Lord upon all that is haughty, on lofty tower, and tall cedar, and upon all pleasant imagery. And misery, sin, and death grow great as all our triumph dwindles on the sight. They baffle the wisdom of the wise, and they are stronger than the valour of the brave. The City heroes are feasted in the morning, and the City streets are a hell at night. And the heart's cheer fails, and love yields to death, and we cannot, cannot bear it. Memory turns to terror—not only for lost love but lost purity. Conscience belittles all greatness, and submerges it all by the greatness of its law, evermore saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts; and by the greatness of its cry, My wound, my wound! My grievous sin and my desolate end.

The greatness of the soul is more apparent in the greatness of its misery than in the triumph of its powers. Our spiritual failure is more than all our mighty doings. We achieve at last—oblivion and a grave; at the most a progress never realised; because each generation bequeaths to the next more hope than peace—if even hope. Then cometh the end.

And the end—what is it?

It is the Christ of God, the Saviour. We taste death, we feel decay, we face judgment. And what is the judgment of God on human guilt and woe? Lift up your eyes, lift up your hearts. Behold the Lamb of God! It is the Saviour. Christ is God's judgment on the world. Our judgment is our salvation. His chastisement is our peace. We deserved death, and death He gave us—the death of the cross. The end of all is the grace unspeakable, the fulness of glory—

all the old splendour fixed, with
never a one lost good ; all the
spent toil garnered, all the frag-
ments gathered up, all the lost
love found for ever, all the lost
purity transfigured in holiness, all
the promises of the travailing soul
now yea and amen ; all progress
already possessed, all works im-
mortalised in faith, all sin turned
to salvation, all the labour and
sorrow hallowed, the tears and
gore of the ages flowing as the
saving water and blood.

For all the blood that's shed upon
earth
Runs through the springs o' that
countrie.

' All things are for our sakes, that
the abundant grace might turn to
the glory of God.

And, even now, eternal thanks
be unto God, who hath given us
the victory through Jesus Christ
our Lord, and by His grace, the
taste of life for every man.

II.

The Divine Self-Emptying.

THE DIVINE SELF-EMPTYING.

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ; who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death," &c.—PHIL. II. 5-8.

THIS is one of the hardest sayings in the New Testament, because one of the greatest. All great things are hard. It takes us into a region where human thought seems to fail, human analogies break down, and human speech sounds meaningless. It has been asked, for instance, if there is any real or possible process answering to the words, "emptied Himself." Can any being divest himself of his own nature, or will himself out of his own mode of being ? Moreover, can we be sure that we know

exactly the allusions in Paul's mind which give point to his words and phrases? The *form* of God and the *fashion* of a man, the *fashion* of a man and the *likeness*—in what do they differ? The equality with God—was it something He had and laid down, or something He might have had, but forbore to claim? The discussion on the passage has been immense.

But do not go away from this or any other difficulty with the notion that because all is not clear, all is quite dark. Because some meanings are disputed do not suppose that all sense is hopeless and all value lost. Because we do not clearly grasp do not suppose that we cannot be mightily seized and held. Exact interpretation may be difficult, but great principles and powers may be so radiant that exactness is lost in a flood of glory, and we are apprehended of more than we apprehend.

For instance, there is the great question of limitation within the Godhead which is here raised. It is said sometimes that any kind of a limit put on Godhead is a denial of Godhead. If God accept limitation He empties Himself to the point of vacuity. And some, therefore, stumble at the idea of personality in God, because it seems to limit and narrow Him to human dimensions. While others, going further, not only fail to grasp the philosophy of a Divine personality, but fail to respond to the reality of it, which is much more serious. Others, again, seeing the great limitations in the Christ of the Gospels, cannot admit His Godhead. They see Him limited in power, and in knowledge, and in His span of life. Some things He could not do, some things He did not know, and an early limit was put by death upon a life which promised to be so great, good, and blessed.

Besides, His cause moves slowly to-day in the world. It spreads at huge cost and difficulty. It looks as if it took His utmost effort to win the results we see, which seem so unsatisfactory for two thousand years of Divine action. "And is the thing we see salvation?" The limits upon His power and success seem so great, whether in His life or in His influence since, that some cannot believe in His Godhead, even when they honour His character and ideals. They think His worth far greater than His power. They think He meant more than He could do, and reached at more than He could grasp. And that, again, leads them seriously to question if worth and power will ever combine; if might will ever be on the side of right in all the history of the world, or in all the order of things. They are not sure if Christ will ever be King. For to believe in Christ means to

believe that His right is the final might, and to lose faith in Christ is to doubt whether right ever can or will rule in humanity at all. Belief in a righteous, glorious future for our race stands or falls, practically, with belief in Jesus Christ. If it do not for you it will for your descendants. So the question is a grave one. Are His limitations the result of weakness or of power?

I.—*Limitation a Power and not a Defect.*

Well, notice here that Christ's emptying of Himself is not regarded as the loss of His true Godhead, but the condition of it. Godhead is what we worship. Christ's emptying of Himself has placed Him in the centre of human worship. Therefore He is of Godhead. We worship Him as the Crucified—through the cross, not in spite of the cross. It has won Him, both by the heart's instinct

and by God's will, the name *Lord*, which is above every name; and it is above in a sense which lifts Him out of the mere human category, and puts other men in the position, not of admirers, but worshippers. Christ's emptying of Himself is therefore treated as one of the powers of His Godhead, not a denial of it. He could not have emptied Himself but for His Godhead. It was His superhuman power, glory, and bliss that made Him able thus to limit His power. The cross is the overflow of exultant Godhead, its purple blossom. Its sorrow is the outlet for Divinest joy, the relief to exuberant Deity.

I think this is the authentic sign and
 seal
 Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,
 And more glad, until gladness blossoms,
 bursts
 Into a rage to suffer for mankind,
 And recommence at sorrow.

If we can neither do this nor com-

prehend it, it is because we are man and not God. We could only understand it by being able to do it. The Father alone knoweth the Son in such a matter, and understands how it was done. The act is a part and sign of Christ's Divine greatness. It is no negation of that greatness. It is a most Divine thing that the eternal Christ should consent to be weak, ignorant, short-lived. It should not come between us and the faith of His divinity at all, when we read true greatness, true Godhead, right. So we have the principle that limitation is a *power* of Godhead, not a curtailment of it. Among the infinite powers of the Omnipotent must be the power to limit Himself, and among His glories the grace to bend and die. Incarnation is not impossible to the Infinite; it is necessary. If He could not become incarnate His infinitude would be partial and limited. It would not be

complete. It would be limited to all that is outside human nature. It would be limited by human nature in the sense of not being able to enter it, of being stopped at its gates. God would be curtailed to the extent of His creation. And that would be a more fatal limitation to His power than any He could suffer from being in it. He may be in without being locked in. But if He must be out it is because He is locked out, and effectually limited by a rival power. The power to limit Himself into man is an essential part of His infinite power. Without it He could not create. And creation is the beginning of Incarnation. It is God's self-concentration. Limitation or concentration is one of the surest signs of power. Vague power, aimless and wild, is not divine. " 'Tis within limits that the master shows," says Goethe, in speaking of the great geniuses

who have perfected their art in a form so small as the sonnet.

II.—*The Divine Personality.*

(1) Let me risk some repetition on this matter. And first as to God's *personality*. It is said that He cannot be personal, because personality means limitation, and the Infinite and Almighty cannot be limited. If He could He would cease to be either, and so to be God. Well, so much as this may be granted. If there be any other power than God that can limit God, then there are two Gods, neither of them the Almighty; and so there is no God, as the word has been, and craves to be, understood. I pass over the very disputable point whether personality is in its nature finite because the individual personalities we meet are so. That would lead me too far. I would only ask, supposing we do find limitation in God, must it follow that it is due

to some power outside God? Is the Infinite Will the one will that has no self-determination?

On the contrary, the limitation in God is due to God Himself. Self-limitation is one of the infinite powers of Godhead. If God were not personal, if He did not contain the mighty concentrative lines of personality, He would be less than God. He would be a waste, ineffectual force, without form and void. He could, indeed, hardly be force even, which must work in lines. He would be a dim essence, an empty substance, a gaseous abstraction without contents, without feature, interest, or life. He would be without order, for order is limitation. But surely order is the Divine presence in the world, not its absence. Law is His law, not another's law laid on Him. And personality is law and order in their highest terms. Limitation is no more undivine or incompatible with infinity

in the one case than in the other, Divine law, indeed, when we express it in moral terms, what is it other than God's self-control?

Personality is thus essential to any ordered Godhead. It is an aspect of the self-limitation which must be among the powers of the Eternal, and of the self-command which must always be the condition of power in any moral being, finite or infinite. If God ceased to be personal, He would be parting with power, He would lose hold on Himself, He would lose character, He would become foreign to all we mean by moral power, hope, or progress, and He would be so far weak, and not strong. What hope for the moral future if the cross, which is the extremity of Divine self-command, and so the condition of Divine conquest, were really found to be utterly alien to the nature of Godhead?

But, on the other hand, God is

not imprisoned in His personality. That were a crude Deism, and only another form of weakness. His is a *free* personality. It is free in the sense that it has not the narrow range we associate with finite personalities. And it is free in the ethical sense. It is *self*-limitation. It is not stamped upon Him by a god beyond God—

In truth the prison unto which we doom
Ourselves no prison is.

The limits we freely lay upon ourselves, or accept freely, are part of our dignity. They are responsibility, and there is no dignity without that. The limited freedom of the married is a higher form than the unlimited freedom of celibates, who want to do as they like. The ordered freedom of a loving family is more free and worthy than the freedom of the lonely lodger with a latchkey. The limited freedom of a simple life is nobler than the unchartered liberty

of luxury, free to indulge each whim. And so the infinite freedom and power of God is not a thing of immunities and abstractions, withdrawn from the world of nature and man. It is the power to live and move, with harmonious ease and completed being, in and through all the rich contents of nature, soul, and will, and finally to subdue them all to His own nature and purpose. Power, in the shape of genius or art, can never be released from ordinary moral conditions. Indeed, we rightly demand in such cases a deeper respect for the fundamental moralities of life. Still more must Omnipotence show itself at home within and not outside the limits of the world and life. It is not Omnipotence if it cannot empty itself of immunities and descend and be found in fashion as nature or man. If it resented this, and were incapable of it, it would be moral impotence, moral anarchy in

particular, and consequently a spiritual pretender.

(2) When we speak of the *Incarnation* it is only another aspect of the same thing. The same infinite power as makes Godhead personal or creative, makes it incarnate. Godhead in emptying itself must have power to divest itself of certain attributes like omniscience, and to be found in fashion as a man, with human weakness, ignorance, and risk. There are many things which we know better than Christ did, and yet we rightly worship Him as the Incarnate Son of God. If the incarnation is not possible, then Theism is not.

III.—*The Incarnation and its Moral Reality.*

I task you a little with this. Many are exercised about such things, which lame their faith. They are hampered by metaphysical difficulties which they have not enough metaphysics to keep in

their proper place, and they make them a standard of faith. They come to Christ and propose to subject Him to certain rational tests and demands. Whereas Christ never concerned Himself about the rationality of His demands or tests; but He wanted religion, faith, surrender to Himself, obedience to God. Perhaps He would have gone respectfully by those who wanted to accept or reject Him by a standard of absolute ethics or absolute reason; and He would have discoursed to the poor in spirit and the really religious about the great matters of conscience, truth, and moral reality. They thought and spoke in His language, He in theirs. Ethical and metaphysical science are good and indispensable, but I doubt if Christ would have understood their speech, as they certainly often misunderstand His. He never spoke of Himself as the universal Reason. In the very

gospel which is prefaced with the Eternity and Deity of the Logos, He never alludes to Himself in that way at all. But He did speak of Himself as the universal Judge and Lord. He claimed to be an authority for the *conscience*, not for the intellect. He does rule mind in the long run. But it is indirectly, from His seat in the conscience. It is because the conscience rules the intellect, and by the conscience reason stands or falls.

So I beg you particularly to observe that this bold phrase of Paul's, thrust into the interior of the Godhead, is not a metaphysical one. It is not rational. It is moral. He speaks of Christ "emptying Himself," but he is not tracing a philosophic process. He has nothing to say about the passage of the Infinite into the finite, and the resumption of the finite by the Infinite again. There is not a suggestion of the vast

unconscious becoming self-conscious in the finite, and so on. He was not brought up in the schools of Alexandria, nor was He the precursor of modern speculation. He was not in this passage running away from religious and practical ends, or indulging in an excursion into the metaphysics of deity. He was urging, with the mightiest motive He could think of, the temper, so essentially Christian, of humility. I know our current, and especially our educated Christianity has forgotten the centrality of that virtue. Does it shine out in the great intellectual centres of this Christian country? Has it leavened and subdued the pagan selfhood and pride of the natural man, say, in the professional classes? Is the absence of it as fatal as it should be to Christian repute? It is not a Christian accomplishment or luxury, but a necessary element in Christian character. If it were not at the

very centre of Christian character and ideal would Paul have gone to the very centre of the Godhead to find the great and final motive for it?

These Philippian Christians were but lately pagan. They had the moral uncouthness of the pagan amid their outward civilisation. You can get plenty of moral barbarism, mere militant self-assertion, yea, unspeakable grossness, amid much æsthetic and mental culture. Paul is urging on them the refinement so essential to Christian character, refinement which was not mere delicacy of sentiment, but the moral quality of true humility. He knows it is a hard thing, but he knows it is central. So he brings to bear the sublimest as well as the most moving of motives. He places before the Philippian Christians the tender, mighty, and solemn renunciations which were in the very bosom of Godhead itself. He

colours with the crimson of sacrifice the pale centres of Deity ; and, led by the Holy Ghost, he declares God to be "human at the red-ripe of His heart." Mark the point. He does not philosophise about the divine *essence*. He deals with a living Godhead. He shows us the *motive* of the divine *action*. He does not carry us into the substance of Deity by metaphysics, but into the heart and conscience, the act and motive, of God by faith. He says Christ in the Godhead emptied Himself. And though we cannot go far in the interpretation of such a vast suggestion, we can take care that it is the right kind of interpretation we put on it. And we find the key to the right kind of interpretation in the other word, "humbled Himself, and became obedient."

There are two phrases, "He emptied Himself," and "He humbled Himself." They do not mean the same. The first refers

to something that took place in the bosom of Godhead before Jesus was born, before the foundation of the world; the second refers to the earthly human life of Jesus, its spirit, principle, and visible aspect. And it is by the second that Paul mounts up to the first. It is the heavenly that *accounts for* the earthly, that is true; but it is the earthly that *brings home* to us the heavenly no less. The humility of Christ's life and death was a palpable thing, intelligible to people who had any due moral perception. It fascinated them. It grew upon them. It opened out and deepened inward. It was a great and eloquent moral fact, a great and significant spiritual word. And it carried Paul beyond the world, beyond humanity, to what was at the root of it, what went on in the unseen Godhead before the foundation of the world. And it made him feel that whatever else was done there, in

the self-emptying of Godhead, it was in its nature a great *moral* act; a great moral renunciation, an act of the same *kind* as that life-long humiliation in which the will of Christ achieved depth after depth of free devotion up to a death of shame. The great eternal act of Christ in heaven and Godhead, before and beyond history, was of a like *nature* to the long act of will by which He went down to death in His human history. It was an act of heart and will, of free resolve, of self-limitation, self-contraction as it were, self-divesting, self-humiliation, self-subordination. We are prone to think of humility as a feature of those who have very little will of their own, and who always take the path of least resistance. No wonder, then, that we make so little of humility. But Paul thinks of it as the supreme act and expression of the supreme will under human conditions, the greatest

thing the greatest will could do. He thinks of it, not as a sentiment, not as a sense of weakness, not as an occasional mood, but as the great ethical act, which forms the real connection, common term, and the *reconciliation* between God and man.

IV.—*The Incarnation as the Miracle of Grace is not in the Birth, but in the Death of Christ.*

The reconciliation between God and man lay in that great spiritual *act* of Christ's humiliation, an act which drew upon His whole person and gave effect to it. Looking forward, the moral effect of that act on us is our central Christian virtue of humility.

For that which men think weakness
within strength,
But angels know for strength and
stronger yet—
What were it else but the first things
made new,

But repetition of the miracle,
The Divine instance of self-sacrifice
That never ends and aye begins for
man ?

And, looking backwards, it is the key to that self-emptying in eternity which is the principle of the Incarnation. This puts a great and neglected truth which I am at some pains to urge. Paul does not take the Incarnation as a special mode of two co-existing natures, human and divine, and make it the means of explaining the humiliation, the cross. That is the way of the philosophic theologian, who illuminates the Word by starting, not from Christ, but from rational truths and principles. But Paul starts with Christ, with His actual historic humiliation. From that footing he is caught into reaches beyond time and the world. He discovers that the key to the nature of the Incarnation is to be found in the humiliation. The two acts are really

one and the same act as seen from time and from eternity. Their nature is one. If the humiliation was a great act of will and obedience, then the Incarnation is the same, rather than an adjustment of two natures in one person. If the humiliation was moral in its central feature, then the central feature of the Incarnation was not metaphysical but moral also. It also was an act of will, of obedience, of self-subordination in the sublimest terms. Now, granting all Christ's miracles, yet there was nothing in that sense miraculous about the long act of *humiliation* in which Christ's whole life went down to death. However miracle may have been associated with it, miracle was not of its essence. It was moral, and not miraculous, in its grandeur. It was moving rather than striking. He refused the miraculous aid of legions of angels in the crisis of His work. Redemption was a *spiritual*

conflict and victory in a great moral war. The humiliation was as little miraculous as metaphysical. It was one of us that was labouring, fighting, trusting, dying, conquering; but it was Godhead as one of us. And we must apply the same principle, if we follow Paul to the *Incarnation*. It is in redemption that we find the nature of the Incarnation. It was not any feature of miracle that made its essence, its value, its power. It was the moral element of self-emptying. It was the sublime act of Christ's will and God's will combined, of Son and Father ever one. The central impulse, quality, and virtue of the Incarnation was not in any process undergone by Divine substance, or any intricate relation set up between two natures, or any circumstance attending the mode by which Jesus was born into the world. You may hold a variety of views on those heads and yet miss the power of His

Incarnation in them all. The centre of the Incarnation is where Christ placed the focus of His work—not at the beginning of His life, but at its end; not in the manger, but in the cross. The key to the Incarnation is not in the cradle, but in the cross. The light on Bethlehem falls from Calvary. The virtue lies in some act done by Christ; and He Himself did no act in His birth, but in His death He did *the* act of the universe. The soul of the Incarnation does not lie in His being born of a pure virgin; but it lies in the death of His pure soul and the perfect obedience of His will as a propitiation for the sins of the world. God was in Christ as reconciler, not as prodigy. The key to the Incarnation lies, not in the miracle performed on His mother, but in the act of redemption performed by Himself. Christ's great work on our behalf was not in assuming our nature at

birth, but in what He did with the nature we call assumed. Men were not redeemed by Christ being born as He was, but by His dying as He did. It is that which establishes His power over us sinners. It is that which makes His real value to our souls, because it is there that He atones, expiates, reconciles. It is that which gives chief value to His entrance in the world—not that He was miraculously born, but that He was born to die and redeem. The saving humiliation was not that of the manger but of the cross. It was a humiliation not inflicted or imposed, but achieved. And the self-emptying behind all was one to be explained, not by anything happening *to* Him in His humble birth, but by what happened *through* Him in His humiliating death. If He had not been born in that way, and yet had died as He did, He would still have been our reconciliation with

God, our Redeemer from the curse, and our Saviour from the sin of the soul and of the race.

The power of His Incarnation has become so weak among men, for one reason, because its explanation has been sought at the wrong end of His life. The wonder has been transferred from Good Friday to Christmas, from the festival of the second birth to the festival of the first, from redemption to nativity, from the fellowship of His death to the sentiment of His babyhood. And so we hear sometimes that Christianity is a religion for women and children, and for men in the moods when they are less men and more mild.

V.—*The Son's Subordination and its Practical Bearings.*

I want to press the lesson home in this way, this moral way, this practical way. We are not all

thinkers, but we are all moralists in some way. We have sins to be forgiven, and we have duties to be done. And duties are determined for us by those moral relations from which not one is exempt. How can we know our duty except we know our moral relations? How can we know our duty to God without our relation to Him?

Christ emptied Himself, we are told. In doing so He did on a higher and previous plane what He did also in the humiliation of His historic life. And there is a paraphrase of the words given for our help. The phrases run in balanced pairs in this difficult passage. And the counter phrase to "emptied Himself" is "He counted not equality with God a *thing to be snapped at.*" He was of Godhead, "in the form of God," within the pale of Godhead, but in Paul's thought He did not possess equality with God, with God the Father. What He emptied

Himself of was, not the equality, but the form, the glory, the immunity of Godhead. He put that off, and put on the contrasted form and apparent dignity of a servant. Of course the Son must be subordinate to the Father, though both are in the same Divine form or family. And the true son is one who realises that subordination. He did not regard equality as a prize, something to be snatched at. Lucifer, according to the story, the first of all the angels, did so regard it. He exalted himself above all that was called God, and fell from heaven's household and glory. Adam, in the other story, also regarded this equality as an object of burning ambition. "Eat, and ye shall be as gods," he was told, and he ate, and his eyes were opened, but his God was hid. Christ as Son had no such passion. He did not aspire to equality of power or knowledge, but to obedience. And so He kept and en-

hanced that glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

Notice, then, I have the practical point still in view. He was of Godhead, but He sought no equality with God. The glory of Godhead He had, but it was the God-like glory of subordination. There is place and order in the Godhead, and he kept it. Subordination is godlike. He was in the category of God, but He did not claim the immunities of God. The Son would not oust the Father. In a word, *He was not inferior to God, but He was subordinate. Subordination is not inferiority.*

Oh, if you could but learn that in this your day, how many griefs, heart-burnings, rebuffs, failures, and soul bitternesses it would save you and your posterity!

Subordination is *not* inferiority, and it *is* godlike. The principle is imbedded in the very cohesion of the Eternal Trinity, and it is in-

separable from the unity, fraternity, and true equality of men. It is not a mark of inferiority to be subordinate, to have an authority, to obey. It is Divine. To suffer no lord or master—that is Satanic; to discard all control but superior force is the demonic form of sin, which soon passes into the brutal. To have no loyalty is to have no dignity, and in the end no manhood.

You hear wild talk among youths that they are free rational beings, and are not going to be a whit more subordinate than they can help, to father, tutor, master, or faith of any kind. The end of which is a hard, coarse individualism, a selfishness gradually growing arrogant (if it be not that to begin with), the rupture of family life, filial faith, homely duty, and kindly rule, and the dissolution of all the fine loyalties of the soul for which great men worthily die.

And you hear wild talk in the

like vein among women, who start the regeneration of their sex by declaring subordination to be un-womanly, a relic of slavery, a badge of inferiority; as if insubordination were any more lovely in woman than in man, and as if women specially could afford to discard loveliness. I am not going here into special applications, or even into necessary qualifications. I am only laying down the Christian principle, rooted in the very nature of God, and essential to the manhood and womanhood He has made. Without the spirit of subordination there is no true godlikeness, no nobleness of manhood, no charm of womanhood. And the true inferiority is insubordination, and the spirit which will have no authority and resents all control.

A very able yet timid writer (I mean Mr. Balfour) has said in a philosophic work, "If we would find the quality in which we most

notably excel the brute creation, we should look for it, not so much in our faculty of convincing and being convinced by the exercise of reasoning, as in our capacity for influencing and being influenced through the action of Authority." With which I heartily agree, so long as by authority is meant what Paul means here, the moral authority of character, of a living personality, of the living law and the living Lord, whose name of Lord, because of His dying, is above all lordship, and whose humiliation is the Eternal Authority, as His cross is the final judge of all things and all men.

VI.—*The God of the Future the Giving God.*

I will close on the keynote, "He emptied Himself." The one thing which it is the business of Revelation to let us know about the depths of eternal Godhead is

this, that its Divinest power is the power to resign, to sacrifice, to descend, to obey, to save. The key to the prehistoric Godhead is the historic Jesus, and His historic obedience, even to the historic cross. And I could almost think that the deepest error which has blinded and lamed Christianity in the world, the root of every other perversion and failure, is indicated here. It is in having conceived of God as a Being whose first and Divinest work was to *receive* sacrifice instead of offering it—one who demanded sacrifices He had never made. Deep into the fabric of Christian thought and habit has struck this pagan strain, that it is God's one royal work to accept sacrifice, and man's one saving duty to offer it. The Christian note is quite other. In the face of all the paganisms, ancient and modern, civil or ecclesiastical, it is bold and original in the extreme. It not only

carries into Godhead the power of sacrifice, but it declares this priestliness to be the very saving power of God, the root of all that is glorious in everlasting glory, or kingly in the King of kings. "God so loved that He *gave*." The Divine King is King because He is Priest. That is the marrow of the Christian revelation, the originality of the Christian vision, the sublimity and finality of the Christian faith. And the Church will not gain the power of which the Spirit has made her dream till she has become permeated with this truth in its fullness. It is not enough that it be held by an enlightened student, saint, or community here and there. It is only when the soul of that truth has fused and recast the whole Church of every land that its revolutionary power upon the creed and practice of Christendom will appear. And society will then be dominated, not by spirits whose best life has been spent in the

acquisition of things for the lack of which men and brethren round them are dying, but by that unrequited elect, that great unpaid, whose life is a long surrender and whose fate is to be long misunderstood ; who do not clamour for their deserts, because the wages of their sin would be death, and also because their faith is that it is a godlier thing to give than to receive ; but they empty themselves to make room in themselves and the world for the fulness and glory of God in the cross of Christ the Lord.

LONDON :
W. SPEAIGHT AND SONS, PRINTERS,
FETTER LANE.

Small Books on Great Subjects.

Pott 8vo, in Buckram Cloth, price 1s. 6d. each

1. **Words by the Wayside.**
By GEORGE MATHESON, M.A., D.D., F.R.S.E.
[Second Edition.]
2. **Faith the Beginning, Self-sur-
render the Fulfilment, of the
Spiritual Life.**
By JAMES MARTINEAU, D.D., D.C.L.
[Second Edition.]
3. **Reconsiderations and Reinforce-
ments.**
By J. M. WHITON, Ph.D.
4. **Mischievous Goodness, AND OTHER
PAPERS.**
By CHARLES A. BERRY, D.D.
5. **The Jealousy of God, AND OTHER
PAPERS.**
By JOHN PULSFORD, D.D.
6. **How to Become like Christ, AND
OTHER PAPERS.**
By MARCUS DODS, D.D. [Second Edition.]
7. **Character through Inspiration,
AND OTHER PAPERS.**
By T. T. MUNGER, D.D.
8. **Chapters in the Christian Life.**
By Ven. Archdeacon SINCLAIR, D.D.

9. **The Angels of God, AND OTHER PAPERS.**
By JOHN HUNTER, D.D.
10. **The Conquered World, AND OTHER PAPERS.**
By R. F. HORTON, M.A., D.D.
11. **The Making of an Apostle.**
By R. J. CAMPBELL, B.A., of Brighton.
12. **The Ship of the Soul, AND OTHER PAPERS.**
By STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.
13. **The Way of Life.**
By H. ARNOLD THOMAS, M.A.
14. **Social Worship: an Everlasting Necessity.**
By J. CLIFFORD, M.A., D.D.
15. **The Supreme Argument for Christianity.**
By W. GARRETT HORDER.
16. **The Art of Living Alone.**
By AMOS H. BRADFORD, D.D.
17. **Martineau's "Study of Religion."**
By RICHARD A. ARMSTRONG, B.A.
18. **The Kingdom of the Lord Jesus.**
By ALEXANDER MACKENNAL, D.D.
19. **Parables for Our Times.**
By WOLCOTT CALKINS, D.D.
20. **Types of Christian Life.**
By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.
21. **The Taste of Death.**
By P. T. FORSYTH, D.D.

RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library
or to the

NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California
Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
2-month loans may be renewed by calling
(415) 642-6233

1-year loans may be recharged by bringing books
to NRLF

Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days
prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

DEC 25 1988

DEC 21 1992

DEC 26 1992 REC'D

Nº 830066

BT265

F67

Forsyth, P.T.

The taste of death and
the life of grace.

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
DAVIS

